Beyond the Niche. The Many Sides of Baroque Sculpture

van Gastel, Joris

Joris van Gastel

BEYOND THE NICHE

The Many Sides of Baroque Sculpture[1]

"All the paintings that those more than excellent painters paint, they copy with the greatest compliance from their superb mother Sculpture."[2] Thus writes sculptor and goldsmith Benvenuto Cellini (1500–1571) in his brief *Discorso* published in 1564 among the "sonnets and prose in Latin and the vernacular by various [authors] on the topic of the differing opinions between sculptors and painters." As a sculptor, Cellini naturally chooses the side of sculpture, arguing that sculpture is the real thing, painting but a shadow. Central to his argument is the idea that, while a painting is essentially two-dimensional, and thus the painter needs to concern himself with only one view, the sculptor has to account for an endless amount of views.[3]

1 Parts of this paper were presented in a somewhat different form and context in June 2010 at the conference *The Secret Lives of Artworks*, organized by Caroline van Eck, Elsje van Kessel and myself at Leiden University. The present text thankfully incorporates some of the suggestions made on this occasion by Alina Payne. I also thank Jörg Fingerhut and Michael Hatt for discussing parts of my argument with me.

2 Paola Barocchi: Scritti d'arte del Cinquecento, Milano/Napoli 1971, vol. 1, p. 595: "Tutte le pitture che fanno questi virtuosissimi pittori con grandissima sommessione le copiano dalla loro gran madre scultura […]." Unless otherwise stated, translations are mine.

3 In his reply to Bendetto Varchi's *inchiesta* in Barocchi: Scritti d'arte (as fn. 2), vol. 1, p. 520 Cellini writes: "una statua di scultura de' avere otto vedute […]." In one of his sonnets (id., p. 600): "più di cento parte." Cf. Gwendolyn Trottein: Drawing Comparisons. Cellini's Perseus Liberating Andromeda and the Paragone Debate, in: Revue d'art canadienne/Canadian Art Review 34 (2010), pp. 55–73; Stefan Morét: Der "paragone" im Spiegel der Plastik, in: Alessandro Nova/Anna Schreurs (eds.): Benvenuto Cellini. Kunst und Kunsttheorie im 16. Jahrhundert, Köln 2003, pp. 203–215. A similar point had already been made by Leonardo; cf. Leonardo da Vinci: The Literary Works, ed. by Jean Paul Richter, 3rd edition, enlarged and revised by Jean Paul Richter/Irma A. Richter, London 1939, vol. 1, pp. 91 f.: "lo scultore nel

> "Also sculpture starts out with one view, but then, little by little, one starts to turn around it; and much difficulty will be found in this movement, for the initial view that so pleased the skilful sculptor, now seen from another angle, will appear as far removed from it, as beauty from ugliness; and so he is confronted with this great trouble for a hundred views and more, all of which he is required to sculpt in an equally beautiful manner […]."[4]

Cellini's argument is one of the practitioner, proving to be aware of the immanent destructive nature of the creative process: as the sculptor moves around his work, every alteration, every addition means the destruction of what was already there.[5] And if Cellini's suggestion of a first, clearly defined point of view (the "also" refers, in fact, to the work of the painter) suggests that the artist can cut up his activity in a series of pictorial problems, the "and more" hints at the vertigo of infinite regress. Indeed, thinking about this infinity of views – a variation on the paradox of Zeno – we become aware of the absurdity of speaking of *vedute*, of points of view, in the first place.

With this ridiculing of the point of view, Cellini's argument hints at a fundamental question regarding the way we perceive sculpture. For even if his remarks were obviously formulated in the context of a debate that today we denote with the term *paragone*, it has a consequence that goes way beyond the consideration of, to quote Benedetto Varchi, "what is the most noble art, that of sculpture, or that of painting".[6] It demands us to rethink the questions of what an image is, and how it is perceived. While the debate that lies at the origins of Cellini's remarks may today sound somewhat tedious, the implications of some of the arguments involved remain largely unresolved. If there was ever a winner to the paragone debate, it was without a doubt the art of painting, and it is still the paradigm of painting that dominates much of the debate of how images –

condurre al fine le sue opere ha da fare per ciascuna figura tonda molti dintorni, acciocchè di tal figura ne risulti gratia per tutti gli aspetti."

4 Barocchi: Scritti d'arte (as fn. 2), vol. 1, p. 596: "La Scultura si comincia ancora ella per una sol veduta, di poi s'incomincia a volgere poco a poco; e trovasi tanto difficultà in questo volgersi, che quella prima veduta, che arebbe contento in gran parte il valente scultore, vedutola per l'altra parte, si dimostra tanto differente di quella, quanto il bello dal brutto; e così gli viene fatto questa grandissima fatica con cento vedute e più, alle quali egli è necessitato a levare di quel bellissimo modo […]."

5 See Joris van Gastel: Michelangelo's Lesson. The Baroque Bozzetto between Creation and Destruction, in: Markus Rath/Jörg Trempler/Iris Wenderholm (eds.): Das haptische Bild, Berlin 2013, pp. 209–225.

6 Cf. Benedetto Varchi in Barocchi: Scritti d'arte (as fn. 2), vol. 1, p. 524: "Qual sia più nobile, o la scultura o la pittura."

including sculptures – are and should be perceived.[7] Cellini's remarks, this paper will argue, form an important challenge to this paradigm.

Facing Backwards

There are works of art where the paradigm of painting instils us with a certain unease. An illustrative example is that of the four statues of the evangelists that are part of the sculptural decorations for the chapel of San Michele in the church of Sant'Irene in Lecce, sculpted in 1641 by local sculptor Cesare Penna (1607–1653).[8] Placed in niches in the entrance arch of the chapel, two on both sides, and sculpted from the versatile *pietra leccese* they appear to have a curious relation to these niches. On the lower left (seen from the aisle) *Saint Mark* stands in profile, looking up with his hands folded in prayer, his glance apparently directed at the *Saint Matthew* above him. (figs. 1, 2) Matthew, in turn, appears to stride away from the beholder, grabbing a strand of his robe as if to stress the turn of his body, while throwing a somewhat discontented look over his raised shoulder. On the other side, in the lower niche, Saint John calmly strides towards the isle, carrying a large brimmed hat in his right hand. (fig. 3) The most striking figure of the four, however, is without a doubt *Saint Luke*. (fig. 4) The turn away from the beholder we found at the opposite side, has here been fully developed; we are now effectively looking at the back of the figure, while the lifted heel of the left foot suggests that he is walking away from us. A heavy cloak with empty sleeves hangs from his shoulders, revealing little of the figure's anatomy; from underneath it, the ox barely manages to peek out of the niche. We can just catch a glimpse of the large book the evangelist carries on his left arm; in his right hand, held behind his back, he holds a pen case and inkwell.[9] His head too is covered by a slightly twisted veil that, maddeningly, hides the face from whatever angle we adopt.

A similar early modern example of a sculpted figure standing backwards in its niche does not easily spring to mind. The closest precedent outside the domain of sculpture can be found in a well-known print series from the hand of Jacopo Caraglio after designs by Rosso Fiorentino, the *Mythological Gods and*

7 Jacqueline Lichtenstein: The Blind Spot. An Essay on the Relations Between Painting and Sculpture in the Modern Age, trans. by Chris Miller, Los Angeles 2008, p. 200.

8 Mario Cazzato: Scultori e scultori-architetti dal Seicento al primo Settecento salentino, in: Raffaele Casciaro/Antonio Cassiano (eds.): Sculture di età barocca tra Terra d'Otranto, Napoli e la Spagna, Roma 2007, p. 134.

9 For an example of a similar set of pen case and inkwell, see Domenico Ghirlandaio's fresco of *St. Jerome in his Study* in the church of the Ognisanti, Florence.

Fig. 1–4 Cesare Penna: The Four Evangelists, 1641, pietra leccese, life size, Sant'Irene, Lecce.

Saint Mark | Saint Matthew

Saint John | Saint Luke

Fig. 5 Jacopo Caraglio, after a design by Rosso Fiorentino: Juno, c. 1523, engraving, 21.5 × 11 cm, Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, Florence.

Goddesses.[10] Engraved in the 1520s (and thus much earlier than Penna's sculptures, though the plates were reworked around the turn of the century) they picture a series of ancient Gods, envisioned as sculptures in niches.[11] The ways in which these figures relate to their niches are no less odd than what we find with Penna's evangelists and indeed, two of them – Juno and Hercules – stand with their backs facing outwards.[12] (fig. 5) Similar figures, though set against frames rather than being placed in niches, can be found among the reliefs sculpted by Baccio Bandinelli and Giovanni Bandini for the chancel balustrade

10 Madeline Cirillo Archer: The Illustrated Bartsch [TIB]. Italian Masters of the Sixteenth Century, vol. 28, Commentary, New York 1995, nos. 2802.24–43. Exhib. cat.: Rosso Fiorentino. Drawings, Prints, and Decorative Arts, ed. by Eugene A. Carroll, National Gallery of Art, Washington 1987, nos. 21–40.

11 Possibly by Francesco Villamena; cf. ibid., p. 124, fn. 1.

12 Resp. TIB 28, comm., no. 2802.027 (no. 4 in the series) and .038 (no. 15 in the series).

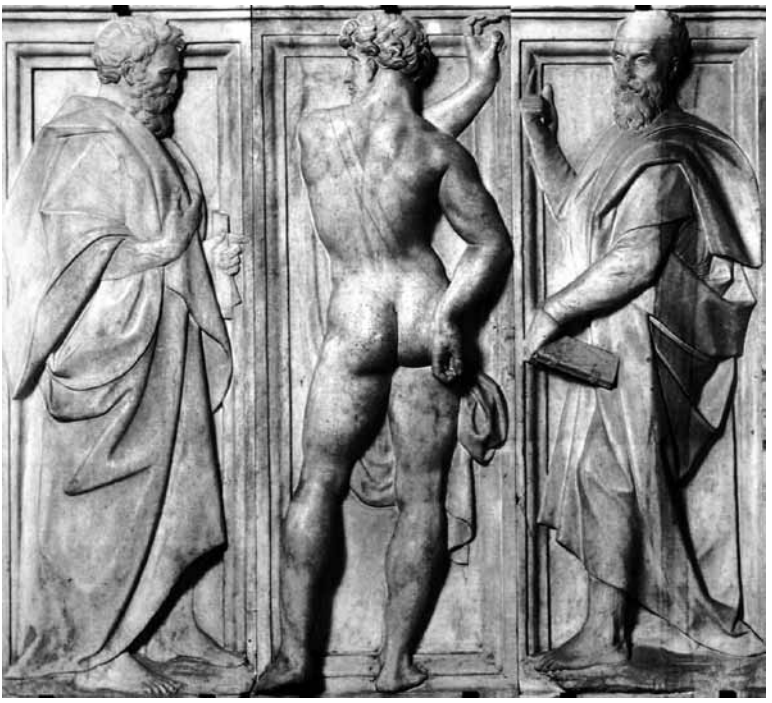

Fig. 6 Baccio Bandinelli: Prophets, 1547–1560, marble, 98 × 36 cm, Museo dell'opera del Duomo, Florence.

of the Duomo in Florence (1547–1572).[13] Among these sculpted men, their differing poses an admirable exercise in *varietas*, a few stand with their backs towards the viewer.[14] (fig. 6) And yet, we engage these prints and reliefs not in the same way as we do Penna's sculpture. Surely, this is the result of a difference in scale and location, but, it will be argued here, it has also something to do with the medium of sculpture itself. The print, like a drawing, painting or a photograph

13 Christel Thiem: Baccio Bandinellis Kompositionsentwürfe für den Chor der Kanoniker im Florentiner Dom 1547/48, in: Städel-Jahrbuch 20 (2009), pp. 165–180; David Greve: Status und Statue. Studien zu Leben und Werk des Florentiner Bildhauers Baccio Bandinelli, Berlin 2008, chap. 12; Francesco Vossilla: Baccio Bandinelli e Giovanni Bandini nel coro del Duomo. Rilievi di Giovanni Bandini e di Baccio Bandinelli dai depositi dell'Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore, in: Timothy Verdon (ed.): Sotto il cielo della cupola. Il coro di Santa Maria del Fiore dal Rinascimento al 2000, Milano 1997, pp. 66–109.

14 For the concept of *varietas* see Michael Baxandall: Giotto and the Orators. Humanist Observers of Painting in Italy and the Discovery of Pictorial Composition, 1350–1450, Oxford 1971, pp. 92–96, 136 f.

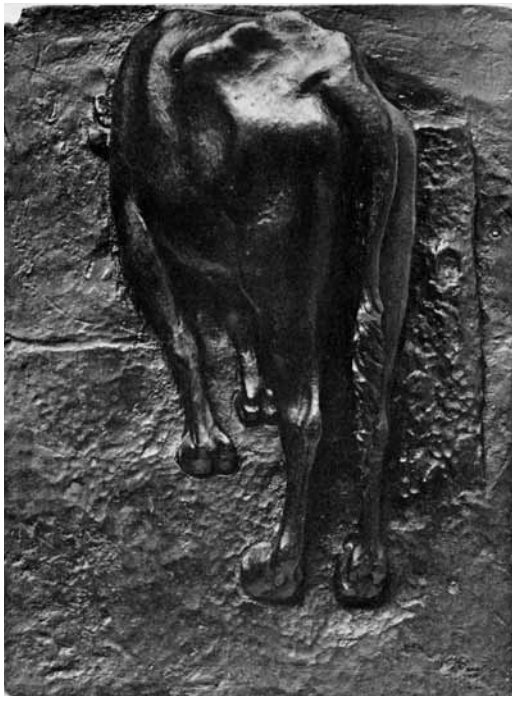

Fig. 7 Bartolomeo Bellano: Pasturing cow, second half of the 15th century, bronze, 18 × 13 cm, Galleria Franchetti, Ca' d'Oro, Venice.

(Tintoretto's sketch discussed in the introduction certainly belongs to these examples) has an internal perspective that remains largely unaffected by the way we engage it.[15] The same goes for the low relief of Bandinelli's panels, though, it must be added, this counts not for all relief sculpture. At the moment when the figures start to liberate themselves from the background, we begin to feel the tendency to look *around* them. Yet another eccentric piece of sculpture illustrates precisely this moment: a bronze relief of a *Pasturing Cow* at the Ca' d'Oro in Venice, usually attributed to Bartolomeo Bellano (1437/1438–1496/1497).[16] (fig. 7) The cow, standing next to a tree trunk, is depicted in strong foreshortening; its bony rear sticks out towards the viewer, while its head is obscured

15 Robert Hopkins: Sculpture and Perspective, in: The British Journal of Aesthetics 50 (2010), pp. 357–373.

16 Volker Krahn: Bartolomeo Bellano. Studien zur Paduaner Plastik des Quattrocento, München 1988, pp. 139, 159; Giovanni Mariacher: Bronzetti veneti del rinascimento, Vicenza 1971, no. 19; Exhib. cat.: Italian Bronze Statuettes, V&A, London 1961, no. 39.

by the body, leaving only a small horn and ear to be seen. The uneven plane of the bronze plaque frames the cow. At the same time, though, the foreshortened figure opens up the plane, as it suggests a world lies behind it – indeed, in a manner not unlike Penna's *Saint Luke*. In the relief the roughly modelled ground becomes both pasture – the cow's hooves are placed at an awkward angle – and sky, the uneven surface now read as a pictorial texture. Bandinelli's figures, in contrast, appear flattened onto the plane that forms their background; the sculptor has no intentions of challenging their relief character, focussing on the contours and subtle *rilievo* landscapes of muscles and draperies. There is something in the way that Bellano's *Pasturing Cow* and Penna's *Saint Luke* relate to their frames, that is, the rim of the plaque and the niche, respectively, that makes us aware of how we engage the sculpted object as opposed to prints or drawings. While we may be tempted to move about in order to catch a glimpse of the face of Penna's *Saint Luke*, we do not feel a similar temptation when we look at Caraglio's prints. The difference, then, is not only in what the images allow us to see, but also in how we engage them.

Points of View

What makes Penna's *Saint Luke*, above all, so extraordinary, is that it directly opposes a way of speaking about sculpture that many scholars adhere to, be it often implicitly.[17] Moreover, this manner of speaking appears to have had a particular fortune in discussions of Baroque sculpture. For an instructive and influential example, we may turn to a publication by Rudolf Wittkower on the early eighteenth-century statues of the Apostles for the Roman church of San Giovanni in Laterano.[18] Commissioned by pope Clement XI to fill Francesco Borromini's curved niches in the nave of the church and supervised by painter Carlo Maratta, these colossal figures were part of one of the most prestigious sculptural projects of the post-Bernini era.[19] In his paper Wittkower quite bluntly states that these statues "had to be worked from three points of view: two temporary, for the points from where the figure, for he who enters from the choir or

17 Donald Brook: Perception and the Appraisal of Sculpture, in: The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 27 (1969), pp. 323–330, esp. p. 327 has called this "picture accounts".

18 Rudolf Wittkower: Die vier Apostelstatuen des Camillo Rusconi im Mittelschiff von S. Giovanni in Laterano in Rom. Stilkritische Beiträge zur Römischen Plastik des Spätbarock, in: Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst 60 (1926/1927), pp. 9–20, 43–49.

19 Michael Conforti: Planning the Lateran Apostles, in: Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome 35 (1980), pp. 243–260. Robert Enggass: Early Eighteenth-Century Sculpture in Rome. An Illustrated Catalogue Raissonne, University Park 1976, pp. 20–21, 39–42, and catalogue.

the portal, first becomes fully visible in its niche, and a third for the beholder right in front of the work."[20]

Now, it is important to note, that this claim is not based on some document stating the patron's wishes to the artist. If anything, seventeenth-century sources suggest a disinterest for the question as to what is the best angle to view a sculpture from.[21] Wittkower, then, develops his argument from grounds determined by his own ideas on what sculpture should be. Among the handful of sculptors who worked on this large project, only sculptor Camillo Rusconi seems to have been aware of this task. As Wittkower puts it, Ruscuni has thought his task better through than his colleagues. Thus even if Pierre Legros' *Bartholomew* seems to be among the better works when regarded from the frontal view, the work, thus Wittkower, falls "totally apart when viewed from the sides"; the silhouette is "kläglich" – pitiful. (fig. 8) Likewise, the side view of Giuseppe Mazzuoli's *Saint Philip* is for Wittkower "fast lächerlich" – almost ridiculous.[22] (fig. 9) And even Rusconi is not always successful in Wittkower's eyes; from the three works he makes for the San Giovanni, only one – the *Saint Matthew* – can count on the author's full praise. (fig. 10)

The manner in which Wittkower forces his idea of points of view on these sculptures can be traced back to Heinrich Wölfflin's discussion of the binary concepts of plane and recession in his *Kunsthistorische Grundbegriffe* of 1915, where, in fact, he briefly mentions the San Giovanni sculptures.[23] Indeed, in the same work he writes that "[t]here is no doubt that the baroque at times over-

20 Wittkower: Die vier Apostelstatuen (as fn. 18), p. 9: "Die Statue muß auf drei Ansichten gearbeitet werden: zwei seitliche, für die Punkte, an denen die Figur für den vom Hauptportal oder vom Querschiff aus Nahenden aus der Nische heraus voll sichtbar wird, und die dritte für den Beschauer von vorn."

21 An exceptional sixteenth-century example can be found in Francesco Bocchi: Le bellezze della citta di Fiorenza, Firenze 1591, pp. 268 f. (on Michelangelo's *Night*): "E bellissima questa figura, quando mostra sua veduta nell'entrare in questo luogo da man sinistra, & nella destra parimente; ma nel mezzo, & in faccia oltra ogni stima è stupenda." Cf. also the 1677 edition, Francesco Bocchi/Giovanni Cinelli: Le bellezze della citta di Fiorenza, Firenze 1677, p. 526. The passage is discussed in Raphael Rosenberg: Le vedute della statua. Michelangelos Strategien zur Betrachterlenkung, in: Alessandro Nova/Anna Schreurs (eds.): Benvenuto Cellini. Kunst und Kunsttheorie im 16. Jahrhundert, Köln 2003, pp. 217–235, esp. p. 225.

22 Wittkower: Die vier Apostelstatuen (as fn. 18), p. 13.

23 For Wittkower's background see Alina Payne: Rudolf Wittkower (1901–1971), in: Ulrich Pfisterer (ed.): Klassiker der Kunstgeschichte, München 2008, vol. 2, pp. 107–123. Cf. Heinrich Wölfflin: Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Das Problem der Stilentwicklung in der neueren Kunst, Dresden 1983, p. 106: "Die Nische bildet ein Gehäuse, in dem die Figuren sich scheinbar frei regen können, und so beschränkt die Möglichkeiten sind, der Beschauer wird doch zum Anblick von verschiedenen Punkten her aufgefordert. Ebenso sind z. B. die Apostelnischen im Lateran behandelt."

Fig. 8 Pierre Legros: Saint Bartholomew, 1712, marble, over life size, San Giovanni in Laterano, Rome.

reached itself and became unpleasing, just because no coherent pictures are achieved."[24] To fully understand this remark by Wölfflin and its relation to Wittkower's argument, however, we need to go one step further back, and have a closer look at Wölfflin's source, that is: Adolf von Hildebrand's (1847–1921) influential treatise *Das Problem der Form in der bildenden Kunst* of 1893.

24 Ibid., p. 100: "Es ist zweifellos, daß der Barock stellenweise zu weit gegangen ist und unangenehm wirkt, eben weil keine gesammelten Bilder zustande kommen." Trans. Heinrich Wölfflin: Principles of Art History. The Problems of the Development of Style in Later Art, trans. by Marie Donald Mackie Hottinger, New York 1956, p. 108.

Fig. 9 Giuseppe Mazzuoli: Saint Philip, 1703–1712, marble, over life size, San Giovanni in Laterano, Rome.

Considered as an attempt to approach sculpture on its own terms, and thus to steer away from a discussion of its merits by comparison with painting, the book had a huge impact on subsequent scholarship.[25] For the present argument, it is particularly interesting to see what Hildebrand says about the perception of sculpture. Influenced by contemporary developments in psychology, he takes as his point of departure the retinal image, *das mechanische Augenbild*, which seems to be directly connected to a discussion of sculpture in terms of points of

25 Lichtenstein: The Blind Spot (as fn. 7), p. 199. For the influence on Riegl see Margaret Iversen: Alois Riegl. Art History and Theory, Cambridge/MA 1993, pp. 68, 75 f.

Fig. 10 Camillo Rusconi: Saint Matthew, 1715, marble, over life size, San Giovanni in Laterano, Rome.

view.[26] Hildebrand discerns two modes of viewing: one from afar and one from closer up. On the first he writes:

26 Adolf Hildebrand: Das Problem der Form in der bildenden Kunst, 7th & 8th expanded ed., Strassburg, 1910, p. 25 [= 1st ed., 1893, p. 29]. Cf. Alice A. Donohue: Greek Sculpture and the Problem of Description, Cambridge 2005, p. 104. David J. Getsy: Encountering the Male Nude at the Origins of Modern Sculpture. Rodin, Leighton, Hildebrand, and the Negotiation of Physicality and Temporality, in: Antoinette Roesler-Friedenthal/Johannes Nathan (eds.): The Enduring Instant. Time and the Spectator in the Visual Arts, Berlin 2003, p. 306. Harry Francis Mallgrave/Eleftherios Ikonomou (eds.): Empathy, Form, and Space. Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873–1893, Santa Monica/CA 1994, pp. 36–39; Iversen: Alois Riegl (as fn. 25), pp. 73–75.

> "Is his [the beholder's] stand point so far off, that his eyes no longer see at an angle, but parallel, then he will receive a single comprehensive image [*ein Gesamtbild*] and this comprehensive image, notwithstanding the appearance of plasticity [*plastische Wirkung*], is in itself purely two-dimensional, because the third dimension – that is to say, all the recessions and protrusions of the appearing object [*Erscheinungsobjektes*], all the modelling [*Modellierung*] – is only perceived through the contrasts in the appearing image plane [*Bildfläche*], as characteristics of the plane that indicate a recession or protrusion."[27]

Here, then, the third dimension is not actually seen, but interpreted or deduced from what is essentially two-dimensional. It is true that Hildebrand recognizes that depth can be perceived from closer by, in what he calls a *Bewegungsakt*, where seeing becomes a palpating, an *Abtasten*, with the eye.[28] Yet, this way of perceiving is rejected as a means to arrive at a satisfying impression of the image:

> "Through the change of perspective [*Standpunktes*], the third dimension is added; but because this connecting of single geometric images into a three-dimensional object through the representations of movement [*Bewegungsvorstellungen*] is created only in succession, it is impossible to bring about in the imagination [*der Vorstellung*] an encompassing image for the three-dimensional shape."[29]

Thus, when exploring the sculpted object from nearby, we can, according to Hildebrand, gather only fragments, *einzelnen geometrischen Bilder*, that will never add up to a comprehensive whole; when, conversely, we regard it from further away, such a whole can be perceived, though its sculptural qualities are reduced to mere contrasts in the essentially two-dimensional percept. Only from further off, then, can sculpture produce an image like that of the painter;

27 Hildebrand: Das Problem der Form (as fn. 26), pp. 5 f.: "Ist sein Standpunkt ein so ferner, daß seine Augen nicht mehr im Winkel, sondern parallel schauen, dann empfängt er ein Gesamtbild, und dies Gesamtbild ist bei aller plastischen Wirkung, die es hat, an sich rein zweidimensional, weil die dritte Dimension, also alles Nähere oder Fernere des Erscheinungsobjektes, alle Modellierung nur durch Gegensätze in der erscheinenden Bildfläche wahrgenommen wird, als Flächenmerkmale, die ein Ferneres oder Näheres bedeuten."

28 Ibid., p. 6.

29 Ibid., p. 10: "Die dritte Dimension fügt sich durch den Wechsel des Standpunktes hinzu; indem sie aber diese Verbindung der einzelnen geometrischen Bilder zu einem dreidimensionalen Gegenstande durch die Bewegungsvorstellungen nur *sukzessive* schafft, kann durch diese Vorstellungstätigkeit ein einheitliches Gesamtbild für die dreidimensionale Form, in der Vorstellung nicht zustande kommen."

if the artist fails to present the beholder with such a comprehensible picture, his work is a failure.

This idea of, to quote a recent author, "the inherent contradiction between the factual three-dimensionality [of sculpture] and optical two-dimensionality" has remained central, though implicit, to much discussion of sculpture to date.[30] And even if the demand for the creation of a single comprehensive image, that is, the *Gesamtbild*, has been given up at least by some, implications are no less problematic. One influential alternative that has come up is to write about the perception of sculpture as involving a "narrative progression of viewpoints," a "kinematic effect created by constantly evolving views" resulting in the appearance of movement.[31] Essentially, sculpture is here understood as a comic strip, a series of two-dimensional images that, through rapid succession, merge into a movie-like impression. The classic example is Gian Lorenzo Bernini's *Apollo and Daphne*, where, it is assumed, the beholder sees how Daphne's metamorphosis gradually progresses as he or she moves from one side of the group to the other.[32] It is true that Bernini has tried to capture something of this development in his work, which indeed makes it very difficult to describe in terms of a single snapshot image. And yet, it is obviously *not* the case that the work of art "appears to move", or at least not in the way a movie or, for that matter, a living body moves.[33] Moreover, this conception implies yet another critical tool. For what if the sculpture does not present the beholder with such a "kinematic effect"?[34]

30 Ursula Ströbele: Review of Gundolf Winter/Jens Schröter/Christian Spies (eds.): Skulptur. Zwischen Realität und Virtualität, München 2006, at www.sehepunkte.de 8/4 (2008) "[…] den inhärenten Widerspruch zwischen faktischer Drei- und optischer Zweidimensionalität […]". In his contributions to this book, Gundolf Winter refers explicitly to Hildebrand; cf. Gundolf Winter: Medium Skulptur. Zwischen Körper und Bild, in: id./Jens Schröter/Christian Spies (eds.): Skulptur. Zwischen Realität und Virtualität, München 2006, p. 22; id.: Skulptur und Virtualität oder der Vollzug des dreidimensionale Bildes, in: id./Jens Schröter/Christian Spies (eds.): Skulptur. Zwischen Realität und Virtualität, München 2006, p. 49.

31 Mary Weitzel Gibbons: Giambologna. Narrator of the Catholic Reformation, Berkeley, CA 1995, p. 109. Genevieve Warwick: Speaking Statues. Bernini's Apollo and Daphne at the Villa Borghese, in: Art History 27 (2004), p. 375.

32 Joy Kenseth: Bernini's Borghese Sculptures. Another View, in: The Art Bulletin 63 (1981), pp. 191–210, esp. p. 195. Cf. Joris van Gastel: Bernini's Metamorphosis. Sculpture, Poetry, and the Embodied Beholder, in: Word & Image 28 (2012), pp. 193–205 for a further discussion.

33 For alternative approaches to the experience of sculpture in the round see David Getsy: Body Doubles. Sculpture in Britain, 1877–1905, New Haven, CT 2004, pp. 37–38 and Alex Potts: The Sculptural Imagination. Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist, New Haven, CT 2000, pp. 207–234. For an alternative account of the suggestion of movement in sculpture see Joris van Gastel: Il marmo spirante. Sculpture and Experience in Seventeenth-Century Rome, Berlin 2013, pp. 99–134.

34 Cf. Winter: Skulptur und Virtualität (as fn. 30), p. 62.

Enacting Perception

Surely it cannot be denied that there are sculptures with a strong suggestion of movement among those sculpted in seventeenth-century Italy. And indeed, contemporary accounts stress the supposed life of sculptures time and again, a life, moreover, that does not leave the beholder unaffected.[35] A particularly interesting contemporary description suggests that this had its impact on how the beholder engages the work of art too: Giovanni Battista Passeri's description of Francesco Mochi's *Saint Veronica* in Saint Peter's. (fig. 11)

> "[Mochi] has represented her in the act of moving, a violent movement not only of walking, but of running with speed. In this it lacks (and this is said without meaning offence) its own essence, for, even though the word 'statue' derives from the Latin verb *sto stas*, which means to stand still, stable, and on one's feet, that figure is no longer a permanent statue and immobile as it should be to form a simulacrum to be enjoyed and admired by the onlookers, but rather: a person that passes, and does not remain."[36]

This provides us with a further problem of the discussion of sculpture. For indeed, if sculpture is no longer regarded as static and passive, what use is it to still speak of a point of view?

Even if we may want to take such accounts with a grain of salt – of course, sculpture is not actually alive – it does strike an interesting note of similarity with Wölfflin's discussion of baroque sculpture in the *Grundbegriffe*. The art of the baroque, he writes here, "repudiates the obligation to the compelling frontality of the work, because only in this freedom did the semblance of living movement seem to it accessible."[37] This "living movement" is not only found in

35 For a discussion see van Gastel: Il marmo spirante (as fn. 33), chapter 2.

36 Giovanni Battista Passeri: Vite de pittori scultori et architetti dall'anno 1641 sino all'anno 1673, ed. by Jacob Hess, Leipzig/Wien 1934, pp. 133 f.: "La rapresentò in atto di moto, e d'un moto violente non solo di caminare; ma di correre con velocità, e qui mancò (e sia detto con sua pace) dalla sua propria essenza, perche, se la parola nominativa di Statua deriva dal verbo latino *sto stas*, che significa esser fermo, stabile, et in piedi, quella figura non è più statua permanente, et imobile come essere deve, per formare un Simulacro da esser goduto, et amirato dai riguardanti; ma un personaggio che passa, e non rimane." Cf. Rudolf Preimesberger: Skulpturale Mimesis. Mochis Hl. Veronika, in: Thomas W. Gaehtgens (ed.): Künstlerischer Austausch/Artistic Exchange. Akten des XXVIII. Internationalen Kongresses für Kunstgeschichte, Berlin 1993, vol. 2, pp. 473–482.

37 Wölfflin: Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe (as fn. 23), p. 101. "Sie lehnt die Verpflichtung auf die zwingende Frontalität der Erscheinung ab, weil nur in dieser Freiheit der Schein lebendiger Bewegung ihr erreichbar schien." Trans. Wölfflin: Principles of Art History (as fn. 24), p. 109.

Fig. 11 Francesco Mochi: Saint Veronica, 1629–1632, marble, 5 m, Saint Peter's, Vatican City.

the restless manner in which the "highlights of the folds flash away like lizards," but also in the "bursting of the tectonic scaffolding [and] the transposition of composition in the plane into composition in recession".[38] Thus, Wölfflin realizes that a suggestion of life is inevitably bound up with a complication of the relation to the niche as well as to the beholder. He concludes, nevertheless, that "the requirement that the different views should yield pictures exhausting the sub-

38 Wölfflin: Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe (as fn. 23), p. 63: "Blitzschnell wie Schlänglein huschen die Glanzlichter der Höhen dahin […]." Ibid., p. 65: "Die Sprengung des tektonischen Gerüstes, die Umsetzung der Flächenkomposition in eine Tiefenkomposition […]." Trans. Wölfflin: Principles of Art History (as fn. 24), pp. 57 and 60, respectively.

ject matter can, with certain modifications, continue to remain in force."[39] It is with this remark that he has paved the way for Wittkower's analysis of the Lateran apostles.

However, it must be noted that not all early baroque scholars adhere to this idea. Noticeably, Albert Erich Brinckmann, another student of Wölfflin, in his landmark study on baroque sculpture of 1917 quite easily shoves Wölfflin's argument aside.

> "Wölfflin thinks like Riegl when he argues that the eye, confronted with the richness of the spatial and plastic forms of the Baroque, contents itself with painterly impressions. For us, to the contrary, the crucial point is not as much the visual impression [*Seheindruck*], for this is just instrumental, but rather the inner representation [*Vorstellung*]. We should always bear in mind that space [*Raum*] and sculpture [*Plastik*] attain physicality, which should be understood kinaesthetically, that is to say, as the result of sensory impressions mediated by movement […]."[40]

While clearly being still dependant on Hildebrand's terminology, Brinckmann appears to discard his idea that perceiving through movement can never result in an encompassing image; for him, sculpture is essentially perceived as physical.

To follow through Brinckmann's point, however, we need to do away with Hildebrand's terminology altogether, and start at the basis, that is, with the role of the retinal image. As we have seen, Hildebrand's assumptions about the role of the retinal image resulted in a conception of sculpture that is essentially subjugated to a picture-based aesthetic.[41] "The reader need hardly be reminded that our actual impression is two-dimensional, a flat picture on the retina," thus

39 Wölfflin: Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe (as fn. 23), p. 101: "Dabei kann die Forderung, daß die Ansichten sachlich erschöpfende Bilder liefern müßten, mit gewissen Modifikationen weiter geltend bleiben." Trans. Wölfflin: Principles of Art History (as fn. 24), p. 109.

40 Albert Erich Brinckmann: Barockskulptur. Entwicklungsgeschichte der Skulptur in den Romanischen und Germanischen Ländern seit Michelangelo bis zum 18. Jahrhundert, Berlin-Neubabelsberg 1917, p. 5: "Wölfflin denkt wie Riegl, wenn er meint, vor dem Reichtum der barocken räumlichen und plastischen Formen bescheide sich das Auge mit dem malerischen Eindruck. Für uns dagegen liegt der Angelpunkt nicht im Seheindruck, denn dieser ist nur Vermittlung, sondern in der Vorstellung. Festzuhalten ist immer, daß dem Raum und der Plastik Körperlichkeit zukommt, die kinästhetisch aufzunehmen ist, das heißt durch sinnliche Eindrücke, die die Bewegung vermittelt […]."

41 Cf. Potts: The Sculptural Imagination (as fn. 33), pp. 61 f.

it is stated in a footnote in the English translation of the book.[42] More recently, so we have seen, this conception has been extended to include cinema. However, current research in psychology and philosophy has shown that the retinal image is not related to visual experience in the direct manner that Hildebrand, and many with him, assumed.[43] Philosopher Alva Noë, to give an example, writes:

> "The retinal image is an image in a mathematical sense; it is a projection or a mapping. The retinal image is not an image in the sense of a picture – or if it is, this is entirely accidental. How it looks, or how it reads, plays no role in its performance of its neurophysiological job description."[44]

In other words, the retinal image is not to be confused with what we *see*. In order to formulate an alternative account, there are two basic insights that need to be made explicit. Firstly, perception happens over time, and secondly, perception involves an active engagement with the world. For the perception of sculpture this implies that we should do away with the idea of a snapshot or a series of snapshots. Rather, we may understand the spectator's engagement with the sculpted object as a dance, where the organic movements of the body both accompany and are part of a continuous flow of sensory impressions, in which every part makes sense only as part of the whole.[45] Just as we cannot understand a piece of music by focusing on a single beat, so too the phenomenological experience of sculpture cannot be understood in terms of a frozen picture. The moment – if such a thing even makes sense – is always still part of the past, while at the same time carrying expectations for the future. In this arch between past and future, the object gains its physical presence. The eye does not capture fully detailed pictures but probes the world, as a hand searching out clues, gradually enveloping the object we encounter. Not only the eye, but the body as a whole is involved here; as it encounters the sculpture *as object*, it prompts us to actively negotiate the ways in which we may act upon it and how it configures the space we move through.[46]

42 Aldolf Hildebrand: The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture, trans. Max Meyer/Robert Morris Ogden (with the author's co-operation), New York 1907, p. 21.

43 Cf. Alva Noë/Evan T. Thompson: Introduction, in: id. (eds.): Vision and Mind. Selected Readings in the Philosophy of Perception, Cambridge, MA 2002, esp. pp. 7 f.

44 Alva Noë: Out of our Heads. Why You Are Not Your Brain, and Other Lessons from the Biology of Consciousness, New York 2009, p. 143.

45 Cf. Alva Noë: Experience of the World in Time, Analysis 66/1 (2006), p. 32.

46 Potts: The Sculptural Imagination (as fn. 33), pp. 215–221. More generally on the relation of action and the perception of presence: Alva Noë: Varieties of Presence, Cambridge, MA 2012. Mohan Matthen: Two Visual Systems and the Feeling of Presence, in: Nivedita Gangopadhyay/Michael Madary/Finn Spicer (eds.): Percep-

Now it may sound as if we are awfully close to Brinckmann's interpretation of Hildebrand here. What we would like to argue against, however, is the intermediate role of an inner representation of the thing perceived, that which Hildebrand and Brinckmann call *Vorstellung*. According to the classical view, which certainly is not adhered to by these authors alone, perception involves the construction of an internal representation – internal in the sense of "in the head" or "in the mind" – of the outer world. Subsequently, perceptual processes are performed on this inner representation. As we have seen, it is precisely here that sculpture becomes problematic for Hildebrand as its representations are understood as pictorial and thus necessarily confined to a single point of view. Alternatively, James J. Gibson has argued for what he calls *direct perception*, that is to say, a theory of perception that does not need the intermediary representation.[47] Rather, for Gibson (and more recent authors such as Alva Noë) perception means an active engagement with the world, where the world represents itself, so to speak. Hildebrand's idea of a comprehensive picture [*Gesamtbild*] is, then, in a way an illusion; there is no manner in which we can (or have to) internalize the 'visual field', or even parts there of, in all detail, and make it accessible for one integrated sweep of internal processing. That we nonetheless have the impression that we perceive a fully detailed picture of the world, is because our access to it is direct; wherever I turn my eye I can find the kind of detail that I expect to be there.[48]

If we ask what this implies for looking at art, two conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, it means that perception does not involve some intermediate, picture-like percept. The sculpture, as the painting, is the only representation we need to deal with, and seeing either one of them involves an active exploration over time. There is no absolute difference between shifting one's attention from one part to another part of a painting and doing this for a sculpture; in both cases, to quote Gibson, "perceiving is an act, not a response, an act of attention, not a triggered impression, an achievement, not a reflex".[49] It is only when we start making use of actual pictures that the issue of points of view comes into play.[50] The second point is that active engagement with the work of art is not a choice for a certain kind of behaviour, but rather an immanent aspect of percep-

tion, Action, and Consciousness. Sensorimotor Dynamics and Two Visual Systems, Oxford 2010, pp. 107–124.

47 James Jerome Gibson: The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception, Boston/London 1979, part. chap. 9.

48 Alva Noë/Luiz Pessoa/Evan Thompson: Beyond the Grand Illusion. What Change Blindness Really Teaches Us About Vision, in: Visual Cognition 7 (2000), pp. 93–106.

49 Gibson: The Ecological Approach (as fn. 47), p. 149.

50 See Rudolf Preimesberger's contribution to this volume.

tion itself. Without movement, there is no perception at all, and accordingly, looking at a piece of sculpture (and, we may add, a painting) is always an embodied process that cannot be dissociated from kinaesthetic experience.[51]

Encountering the Body

Of course, this does not mean that perception is not informed and mediated by memories, impressions, ideas and so forth; in fact, by stressing the role of the body we become aware of the role of the memory of the body itself. Importantly, when we are talking about figurative sculpture, there is yet another way in which we relate bodily to the sculpted object, namely, as we see the figurative object *as body*.[52] For indeed, if the impression of physical presence of the sculpted object involves not necessarily more than the subtle movements of eye, head and body, Penna's evangelists make us aware of the fact that the sculpture provokes us to move and search for a particular kind of *encounter*. To illustrate this point it is interesting to confront Penna's work with another sculpture, one wholly different in conception and context: Stefano Maderno's *Saint Cecilia*, sculpted in 1600 for the church with the saint's name in Trastevere. (fig. 12) Like Penna's *Saint Luke* she too has her head turned away from the beholder and wrapped in a veil. In this case, however, the averted face disturbs us less, as at the same time, it presents us with a substitute focal point: the bare neck with its almost chirurgical wound, sign of her martyrdom. Most importantly, however, is that in the case of the *Saint Cecilia* we are looking at a relic, an incorruptible though lifeless body, devoid of movement.[53] Penna's *Saint Luke*, to the contrary, is very much alive, and his tuned back is understood as a movement away from the beholder.

We tend to think of sculptures, particularly figurative sculptures, as having a front, a back, and, when understood as alive, of moving in a certain

51 Cf. Jörg Fingerhut: Das Bild, dein Freund. Der fühlende und der sehende Körper in der enaktiven Bildwahrnehmung, in: Et in imagine ego. Facetten von Bildakt und Verkörperung, ed. by Ulrike Feist/Markus Rath, Berlin 2012, pp. 177–198.

52 In effect, this could be extended to include everything that has an internal orientation to which we relate practically or emotionally.

53 Carlo la Bella (ed.): Santa Cecilia in Trastevere, Roma 2007; Tomaso Montanari: Una nuova fonte per l'invenzione del corpo di Santa Cecilia. Testimoni oculari, immagini e dubbi, Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft 32 (2005), pp. 149–165; Tobias Kämpf: Die Betrachter der Cäcilie. Kultbild und Rezeptionsvorgabe im nachtridentinischen Rom, in: David Ganz/Georg Henkel (eds.): Rahmen-Diskurse. Kultbilder im konfessionellen Zeitalter, Berlin 2004, pp. 98–141; Harula Economopoulos: La reliquia svelata. Note su Baglione, Baronio e la S. Cecilia di Stefano Maderno, in: Stefania Macioce (ed.): Giovanni Baglione (1566–1644). Pittore e biografo di artisti, Roma 2002, pp. 215–223.

Fig. 12: Stefano Maderno: Saint Cecilia, 1600, marble, life size, Santa Cecilia in Trastevere, Rome.

direction. These characteristics determine ways of approaching the work that are grounded in our social interactions with others – others whose movements and intentions we learn to understand through the experiences of our own bodies.[54] Clues are found in the other's movements, posture, and, most importantly, the face and eyes.[55] Here the niche or pedestal become an important point of reference; they create the frame against which the sculpture's suggested movements are measured, and at the same time they set expectations that mediate the beholder's encounter.[56] It is precisely such expectations that Penna's work challenges, thus making us aware of how the combination of orientations internal to the work and its framing affects the way we engage it. On occasions, this kind of anthropomorphic engagement with figurative sculpture can cause the disquiet-

54 For a discussion see Shaun Gallagher: How the Body Shapes the Mind, Oxford 2005, in part. chapter 9. For non-figurative objects see Klaus Kessler/Sebastien Miellet: Perceiving Conspecifics as Integrated Body-Gestalts Is an Embodied Process, in: Journal of Experimental Psychology. General 142 (2013), pp. 774–790; Michel-Ange Amorim/Brice Isableu/Mohamed Jarraya: Embodied Spatial Transformations. 'Body Analogy' for the Mental Rotation of Objects, in: Journal of Experimental Psychology. General 135 (2006), pp. 327–347.

55 Cf. van Gastel, Il marmo spirante (as fn. 33), pp. 129–131.

56 For the pedestal see most recently Alison Wright: '… con uno inbasamento et ornamento alto': The Rhetoric of the Pedestal c. 1430–1550, in: Art History 34 (2011), pp. 8–53, with an overview of relevant literature at fn. 14.

ing feeling of a person entering one's personal space.[57] There is, then, a dual nature to sculpture: as we perceive it as aesthetic object we are tempted to creep up on it and study from close by the sculptor's technical abilities, the material qualities; at the same time, however, we perceive it as body, potentially sensual, soft, and living, and we respond to it as such.

To conclude, then, it can be argued that baroque sculpture does not 'disturb' us because it cannot be perceived as a *Gesamtbild* but rather because its dual nature asks for a different way of engaging it altogether. To analyze these works in terms of one or more views is hardly helpful, and indeed, denies the fact that actual perception is an embodied process, and activity that involves a certain amount of time. The recurrent notion of perception as picture-like in literature about sculpture even today, makes us painfully aware of the fact that, even if Hildebrand's treatise can be read as an attempt to see sculpture no longer solely in comparison with painting, this comparison has not been fully annulled by it. Rather, insights from psychology, but also modern techniques of imaging, such as photography and film, have resulted in a shift towards thinking of images only in terms of the two-dimensional.[58] The result is a paragone that is more implicit than that of Cellini's time, a paragone no longer between painting and sculpture, but rather, between "image" and sculpture, and, at a more fundamental level, a paragone between eye and body. As should be clear from what has been said above, this too is a paragone that does not do justice to the complexities of the respective arts. Nor does it help us to understand how the two arts are connected and may work together. Maybe a paradigm based on the art of sculpture could bring us closer to an answer.

57 For recent perspectives on the topic of anthropomorphism see The Art Bulletin 94 (2012), pp. 11–31. For an attempt to confront the literature on personal space with that on the interaction with objects, see Donna M. Lloyd: The Space Between Us. A Neurophilosophical Framework for the Investigation of Human Interpersonal Space, in: Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews 33 (2009), pp. 297–304, p. 298. The "area individuals maintain around themselves into which others cannot intrude without arousing discomfort or even withdrawal".

58 For a discussion of the role of these modern techniques see Geraldine A. Johnson: "(Un)richtige Aufnahme". Renaissance Sculpture and the Visual Historiography of Art History, in: Art History 36 (2013), pp. 12–51 (with further references).